

Coins

New catalog serves fans a Mexican treat

By Roger Boye

WHEN A WEALTHY Aztec Indian decided to save some money in Mexico centuries ago, he stashed away bags of cacao beans rather than accumulate gold and silver.

The beans, which are the source of cocoa and chocolate, were the primary form of money for the Indians, with a sack of 24,000 beans the highest monetary unit. Members of the advanced Aztec civilization found the beans easy to handle, readily available, and widely accepted because of their nutritious food value.

But even the simple cacao bean could be "forged." Some Indians would try to pass off counterfeits by removing a bean's nutritious content and replacing it with dirt to restore the weight.

That description of Aztec money is but a small part of a new book by Krause Publications called "Standard Catalog of Mexican Coins, Paper Money and Medals." Most of the 256 pages are used to list Mexican numismatic items made since the 16th Century and their collector value. In addition, author George W. Vogt includes explanatory material about money used by the Aztecs, the Spanish conquerors, and other Mexican rulers.

Much of the information has been published elsewhere, and parts of the book seem to be lifted, almost *carte blanche*, from two other Krause publications on world coins and world paper money. Some other material is in W.D. Craig's "Coins of the World 1750-1850" and similar basic references. Nevertheless, most collectors of

Mexican coins and currency will be pleased to have all of the facts pulled together under one cover.

Collectors familiar with the two Krause world catalogs will find the new Mexican book easy to use. The formats are similar and the page sizes are nearly the same. Fortunately, the Mexican book is printed on a higher grade paper.

Although Krause doesn't say so, it's a good bet that the catalog will be published annually. The first edition, which costs \$12.50, is sold in many coin stores, or it may be ordered from the publisher (Iola, Wis. 54945).

MOST COLLECTORS probably will get little use out of another recently published Krause book, the fourth edition of "Standard Guide to U.S. Coin and Paper Money Valuations." It's an inexpensive paperback with a cluttered cover, probably produced to appeal to the noncoin collector who is browsing in a bookstore. The catalog lists only price information, something that even the novice is likely to already have from more worthy sources.

THE OTHER major numismatic publisher, Amos Press, has released the 1978 edition of "Coin World Almanac," a requisite for coin-collecting trivia enthusiasts.

The 1978 third edition includes several new features, such as a kruggerand sales chart and a more detailed United States Mint medal list. This 984-page book also is sold in many coin stores, or it may be ordered for \$10 by writing Amos Press at P.O. Box 150, Sidney, Ohio 45367.